

Statement of Jerry Hardison, O.D.
Education Committee
March 20, 2015

Members of the committee:

My name is Dr. Jerry Hardison. I am a practicing Optometrist with an office here in Hartford. I serve many patients in the community including families, children and low-income individuals who receive care under Medicaid.

The Connecticut Association of Optometrists would like to offer comments about House Bill 7023, *An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes*.

Our comments pertain to the proposed deletion of vision screenings for pupils in grades two, six and nine. This change is outlined in Section 4(a) of the bill.

We believe strongly that all pupils in school should have an annual eye examination. We believe vision screenings are inadequate and easily miss many emerging vision problems of young people.

Nonetheless, we recognize that the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended a schedule of vision screenings that differs from the current requirements here in Connecticut. Thus, the proposal to delete vision screenings for pupils in the three grades I listed earlier.

The current statute provides for a written notice to be made to the student's parent or guardian if they fail the screening. The CAO believes this notice should be strengthened to specifically tell the parent or guardian that the child needs to be examined further. We have worked with the Connecticut Nurses Association on additional language in this regard and it is printed below. Basically, the new statement would tell parents that their son or daughter has failed a vision screening and that he or she should be examined by an eye care professional, meaning an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

We would urge you to make this amendment to Section 4(a). Thank you for your interest in this matter and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sec. 4 (a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide annually to each pupil in kindergarten, grade one and grades [one to six] three to five, inclusive, [and grade nine,] a vision screening, using a Snellen chart, or equivalent screening. The superintendent of schools shall give written notice to the parent or guardian of each pupil who is found to have any defect of vision or disease of the eyes, with a brief statement describing results of failed vision screening, such defect or disease, and a recommendation for the pupil to be examined by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist.